

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 435

By Sontany

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize Brenda Lee upon receiving the Recording Academy's Lifetime Achievement Award.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to pay tribute to those noteworthy musicians who, through their extraordinary talents, have earned the universal respect of their peers and fans alike; and

WHEREAS, one such famed musician is Brenda Lee, a highly esteemed member of the Country Music Hall of Fame who recently received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the Recording Academy; and

WHEREAS, the highest honor given by the Grammy Awards, the Lifetime Achievement Award is a special merit award presented by a vote of the Recording Academy's National Trustees and given to performers who, during their lifetimes, have made creative contributions of outstanding significance to the field of recording; and

WHEREAS, in receiving this award, Brenda Lee joins the ranks of music greats who have received it before her, including world-renowned artists such as Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan, Billie Holiday, John Lennon, Fred Astaire, Ray Charles, Ella Fitzgerald, Nat "King" Cole, Judy Garland, Frank Sinatra, and Elvis Presley, among a host of others; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lee is most celebrated for her pop hits "Sweet Nothin's," "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," and "I'm Sorry," which she recorded as a teenager in Nashville prior to embarking on her successful country music career; and

WHEREAS, though she has found a home in the bright lights of Nashville stardom, Brenda Lee is a native of Atlanta, Georgia, where she was born Brenda Mae Tarpley on December 11, 1944; and

WHEREAS, the daughter of Grayce Yarbrough Tarpley and Ruben Lindsey Tarpley, Brenda was the second of four children; her sisters, Linda and Robyn, and her brother, Randall, still reside in Georgia; and

WHEREAS, her father worked as a carpenter and a semi-professional baseball player until his life was cut short in a tragic construction accident in May of 1953; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee made her first public appearance in 1950, when she was five years old, representing Conyers Grade School in an annual talent contest at the Spring Festival, winning first prize for her singing; and

WHEREAS, Brenda went on to sing on a regular basis on Starmakers Revue, a popular radio show in Atlanta; "Too Young" was the first number she ever sang on the air, and she continued to sing on the radio program for one year; and

WHEREAS, Brenda's radio exposure led to a regular spot on a local television program, *TV Ranch*, which was broadcast on Atlanta's WAGA-TV; she appeared each Saturday to sing with John Farmer and the TV Ranch boys; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee's appearances on *TV Ranch* led to her first professional, paid job, a performance for a Shriner's Club Luncheon for which she earned twenty dollars; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee attended several grade schools, most of which were in Georgia, and she went on to attend Maplewood High School in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, in 1955, when she was eleven, her family moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, and Brenda began working in Jimmy Skinner's Record Shop on two Saturday programs broadcast over WNOP in Newport, Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, later that year, her family moved to Augusta, Georgia, where she appeared on the *Peach Blossom Special* on WJAT-TV; while appearing on this show, she adopted the name "Brenda Lee," a moniker created by the show's producer, Sammy Barton; and

WHEREAS, soon after, the Brenda Lee Record Shop opened in Augusta, and WRDW began a program that featured Brenda each week singing her self-composed theme song alongside disc jockey Charlie Raiford "Peanuts" Faircloth, who announced the show; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee had her first big break in February of 1956 when the great Red Foley, who was visiting Augusta with the cast of the ABC-TV show *Ozark Jubilee*, appeared at

the Bell Auditorium; Peanuts Faircloth asked Mr. Foley if he would let Brenda sing a song in the show, and Mr. Foley agreed; and

WHEREAS, when she performed “Jambalaya,” Red Foley was so captivated by her voice that he forgot to exit the stage and, instead, stood there in a trance, wowed by the vocals of the young performer; and

WHEREAS, after this riveting performance, Brenda Lee was offered a guest spot on the *Ozark Jubilee*, doing her first performance on March 31, 1956; and

WHEREAS, on May 21, 1956, Brenda Lee signed her first recording contract with Paul Cohen, the A and R man at Decca Records; her first recording session was in 1956, during which she recorded seven songs, including “Jambalaya” and “Bigelow 6-200”; and

WHEREAS, she released “Jambalaya/Bigelow 6-200” as her first single on September 17, 1956; in 1957, her third release, “One Step At a Time,” peaked at number fifteen on the Billboard Country Charts; and

WHEREAS, in 1957, Dub Albritten, Red Foley’s manager, became Brenda Lee’s personal manager, and he remained so until his death in 1972; Brenda and her family also moved to Nashville during this year; and

WHEREAS, during her years of performing, she enjoyed the success of many top-ten singles, including “I’m Sorry” and “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree,” which turned out to be two of the biggest sellers of her long career; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee earned the nickname “Little Miss Dynamite” after releasing the record *Dynamite* in 1957 on the Decca label; she was a contemporary of Elvis Presley, Ray Charles, and the Beatles, the last of whom opened for her in 1962 during a tour of the United Kingdom; and

WHEREAS, since that tour, Brenda Lee has toured fifty-two countries and recorded in six different languages; and

WHEREAS, although she attained her first country-music hit in 1957 with “One Step at a Time,” teenage Brenda Lee followed the advice of her management and record label, both of whom thought it wiser to promote her to the pop market; and

WHEREAS, as a result of this decision, her early singles were never pushed at country radio, though her vocal sound and musical roots were decidedly country; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee's first Grand Ole Opry performance was in December of 1957 at the Ryman Auditorium, where she met and performed with Elvis; and

WHEREAS, in 1958, Owen Bradley became her record producer; Mr. Bradley remained her producer for the majority of her recordings until 1976; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee's first album, *Grandma What Great Songs You Sang*, was released on August 3, 1958; the following year, she recorded "Sweet Nothings," which was released in September and peaked at number four on the Billboard Charts; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee recorded "I'm Sorry" in 1960, and the song hit number one during that summer and remained in the top 100 for more than six months; it was also her first gold record, selling more than one million copies, and it remains one of her best selling records; and

WHEREAS, in 1958, Brenda Lee recorded "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," which was released as a single and was re-released in 1960, when it became a big hit; now, the song holds the number four place in the Top Ten All Time Christmas Songs and is her second biggest selling record; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, she made appearances and won fans in France, Germany, Italy, and England, followed by a tour in South America; in Brazil, she received the greatest reception ever accorded an American entertainer, as she made a month-long tour with twenty-one performances, which gained exposure on fifty-one front page newspaper stories and was featured in nine magazines; and

WHEREAS, on June 12, 1963, Brenda Lee graduated from Hollywood Professional School in California; and

WHEREAS, during a Jackie Wilson concert at the old Fairgrounds Coliseum in Nashville, she met Ronnie Shacklett, and the two were married on April 24, 1963, at Radnor Church of Christ in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, this blessed union produced two daughters, Julie and Jolie, born in 1964 and 1969, respectively; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lee's music came full circle in the early 1970s when she worked to re-establish herself as a country musician; her efforts proved successful when she yielded a number of top-ten songs on the country charts, beginning with her 1973 cut, "Nobody Wins"; and

WHEREAS, during that same year, she charted "Sunday Sunrise"; then, between 1974 and 1975, she recorded a string of country hits, including "Wrong Ideas," "Big Four Poster Bed," "Rock on Baby," and "He's My Rock"; and

WHEREAS, after a string of top-forty hits, Brenda Lee again charted a top-ten, Grammy-nominated single with her 1979 song, "Tell Me What It's Like," and two follow-up songs in the 1980s, "Broken Trust" and "The Cowboy and the Dandy"; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee starred at Opryland for three highly successful seasons between 1988 and 1990, during which she performed in *Music, Music, Music* and *Spirit of America*; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee achieved further country radio and country chart success when she recorded a duet with George Jones and a 2008 eleven-song, Dove Award-nominated gospel album, *Gospel Duets with Treasured Friends*; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to accolades for her famed work, Mrs. Lee has sold more than one hundred million records and has charted more hits than any other female artist of her day; in addition to the Lifetime Achievement Award, she has been inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame, the Rockabilly Hall of Fame, the Grammy Hall of Fame, the Hit Parade Hall of Fame, and, in 1997, she joined the Country Music Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, she has won nearly every pop award and received four Grammy nominations; she also held the title of Most Programmed Female Vocalist for several consecutive years; was awarded with a number of honors from the National Association of Record Merchandisers; was named Melody Maker's Number One Female Vocalist in the United Kingdom; won the New Musical Express Award for being the number one female vocalist in the world; and has recorded numerous gold and platinum albums and singles; and

WHEREAS, in a 1977 *Newsweek* feature that named the top twenty artists of the past twenty years, Brenda Lee was listed as number seven behind famed musicians including Elvis,

the Beatles, Fats Domino, and Rick Nelson; she was also named as one of five American artists who best survived the coming of the Beatles and the British invasion of the 1960s; and

WHEREAS, on September 6, 1984, Brenda Lee was honored with the prestigious Governor's Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences; only four artists had ever received the award before her; and

WHEREAS, her unprecedented musical career aside, Mrs. Lee has given of her time and resources generously, serving on the Country Music Association's Board of Directors, the Country Hall of Fame Board, and the Board of Governors for the Nashville Chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences; and

WHEREAS, she has served with numerous charitable organizations, including the Kidney Foundation, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Society, the American Cancer Society, Dreammakers, the Leukemia Society, groups that fight Multiple Sclerosis and Cerebral Palsy, the March of Dimes, the YWCA for Abused Women, and Habitat for Humanity; and

WHEREAS, she accepted her Lifetime Achievement Award on February 7, 2009; and

WHEREAS, in a statement announcing the 2009 Award recipients, Neil Portnow, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Recording Academy, said, "This year's recipients are a prestigious group of legendary performers, creative architects, and technical visionaries who have made lasting contributions to the music and global communities"; he further added, "Their outstanding accomplishments, legendary passion, and artistry has positively affected our culture and will continue to influence and inspire generations to come"; and

WHEREAS, she received the prominent award alongside other honored musicians, including Gene Autry, the Blind Boys of Alabama, the Four Tops, Hank Jones, Dean Martin, and Tom Paxton; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee continues to perform and tour; she is truly an example of the finest musical ability and a beloved performer who has contributed greatly to the musical heritage that makes Nashville and the State of Tennessee so remarkable; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Lee is a Tennessean of whom all Tennesseans can be proud, and she should be justly recognized as a legend of country music, one who helped shape the

musical genre while entertaining countless fans in this nation and all over the world; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Brenda Lee upon receiving the greatly esteemed Lifetime Achievement Award from the Recording Academy, celebrate the significant contributions she has made to the growth of country music, and extend to her our best wishes for every future success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.